

# Excellence in Diversity and Recruitment

*Matthew Tropiano*



NAVSEA's recruitment strategy has been a demonstrable resounding success and is leading towards an inspired, motivated, and increasingly diverse acquisition workforce.

**S**ince its inception, the Office of Corporate Recruiting has been spearheading Naval Sea System Command Headquarters' initiatives to hire the best, increase the diversity, and retain highly qualified employees for NAVSEA through the Naval Acquisition Intern Program (NAIP). These efforts are ultimately changing the dynamic workforce of NAVSEA and impacting two of the five strategic goals that both then-NAVSEA commander Vice Adm. Paul E. Sullivan and current NAVSEA commander Vice Adm. Kevin McCoy have indicated are critical to the organization's strategic business plan: Strive to attract, recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing, competency-based, mission-focused workforce; and build and value a culture of diversity.

Last year, the average grade point average of NAVSEA's new NAIP hires was 3.4. Six out of 10 interns were racial or ethnic minorities or women. This article will outline how NAVSEA is increasing diversity among new hires, making the most of job fairs, maximizing information sessions, implementing interview panels, and addressing retention issues.

## **Pulling Them In: The Job Fair**

The strategy at the job fair is to attract and share NAVSEA's vision with high-potential applicants. The NAVSEA team that recruits at the job fair represents a cross-section of NAVSEA top- and mid-level managers, but mostly the team is composed of newer hires who share their recent NAVSEA experiences with applicants.

Positioning the display booth is important. The director of recruitment works closely with the job fair coordinator to ensure that NAVSEA's booth is positioned next to the particular university's or region's top employer. NAVSEA's goal is to recruit the same top applicants who are also considering those employers.

NAVSEA's job fair recruiters promote the significant size and impact of what NAVSEA does. Constantly running is a video displaying the design and development of NAVSEA ships and submarines, as well as the other the critical services NAVSEA and the U.S. Navy provides. "Ever Buy One of These?" a NAVSEA poster asks potential jobseekers; under the headline are pictures of a submarine and an aircraft carrier.

The NAVSEA booth also promotes the evening's informational session, which features a multimedia experience about NAVSEA.

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The recruitment team is very proactive, approaching candidates as they walk into the job fair, talking to them while they line up at other booths, and seeking out officers in recognized societies (for example the Society of Women Engineers, Society of Mechanical Engineers, etc).

### **Giving Them the Full Story: The Information Session**

The desired outcome of the day's job fair is to have interested, high-potential applicants sign up for and attend NAVSEA's evening informational session. Recruiters distribute invitations and make follow-up phone calls to remind applicants of the information session.

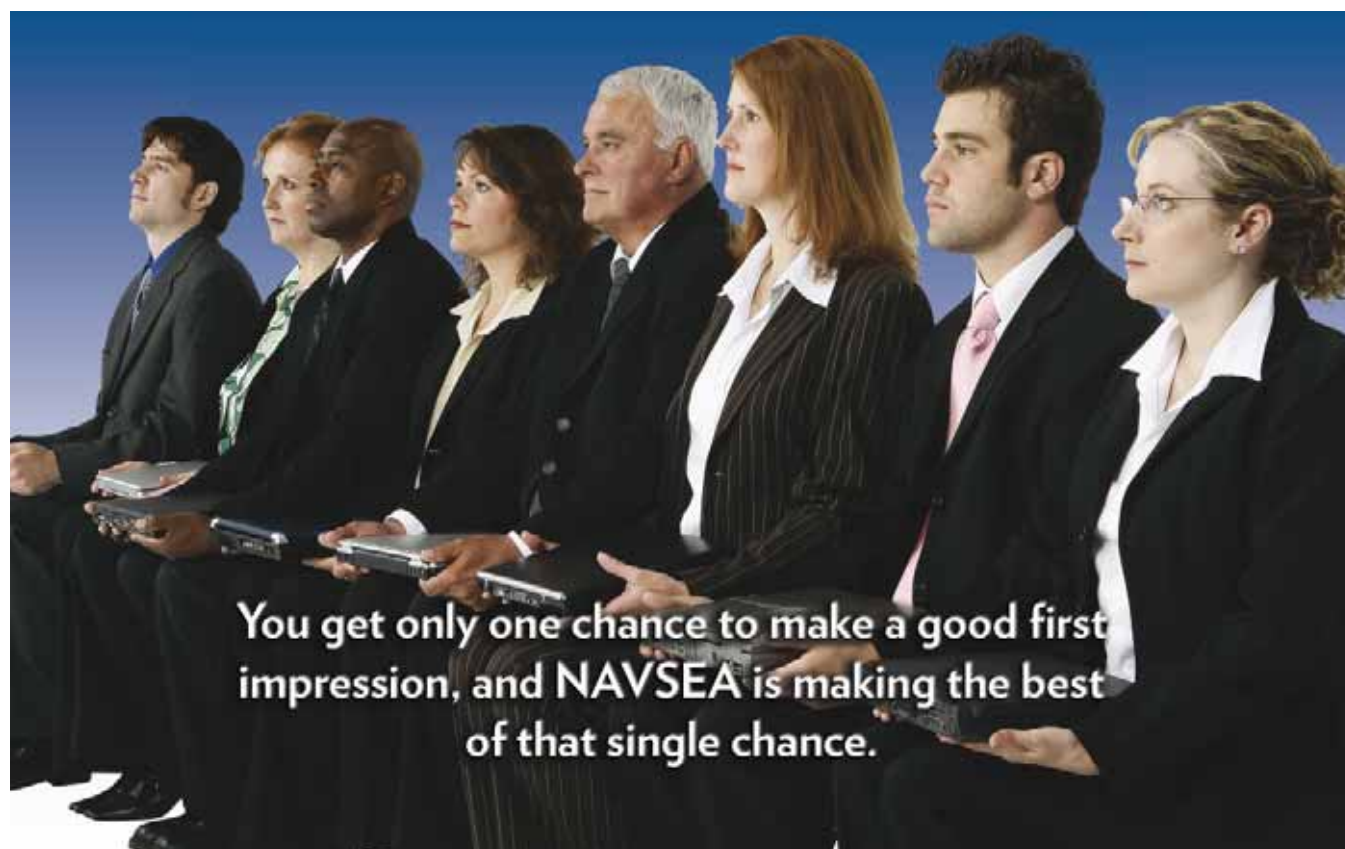
The strategy of the information session is to present an attention-getting multimedia presentation of who NAVSEA is, what NAVSEA does, where NAVSEA is located, and what types of applicants NAVSEA is looking for. Studies have shown that today's graduates are looking to serve something greater than themselves, so key NAVSEA video clips emphasize service to the United States and to the fleet. A cross section of NAVSEA employees, from top-level executives to mid-level managers to recent new hires, present their experience and perspective, and they talk about how they have risen through their development and experience at NAVSEA. The presenters remind listeners that they, too, were once sitting where the listeners are, and since then, have been able to serve the United States in a career-developing and satisfying manner.

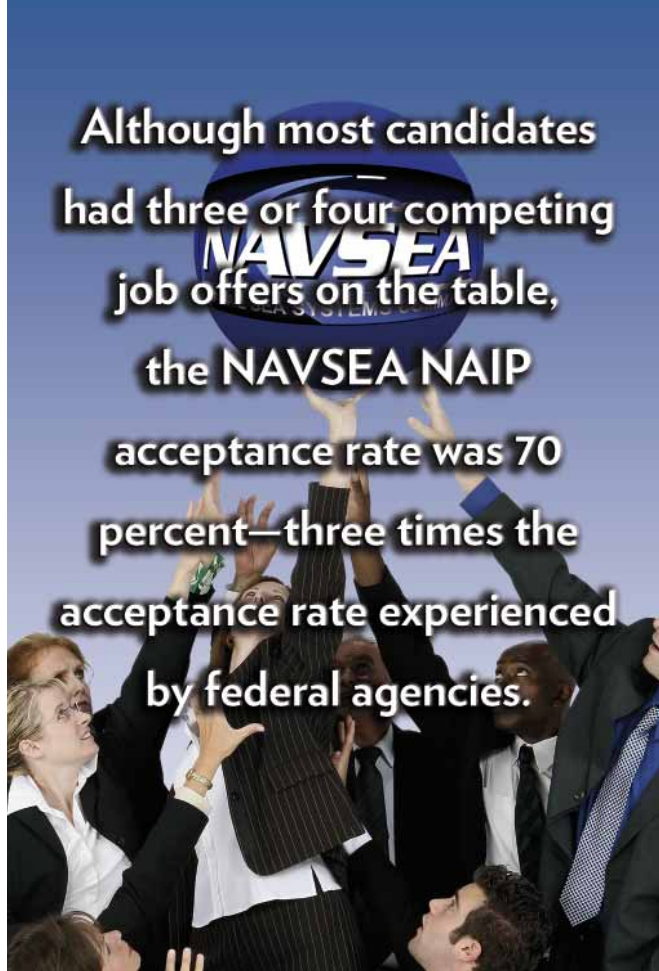
We aim for the information session to intrigue and interest applicants about working for NAVSEA, and we hope that NAVSEA employees will get to know the applicants better in a smaller, more relaxed environment. During the job fair and the information session, both the potential applicants and the recruitment team are assessing the potential employment match. At the end of the information session, the recruitment team sits down to review all the applicants—considering demonstrated leadership, experience, education, and academic excellence—for potential best fit within NAVSEA.

### **Getting to Know Them: The Interview Panel**

Following the job fair, high-ranking applicants are invited to the Washington Navy Yard. Two to four NAVSEA employees meet with the candidate upon arrival and provide the candidate with an even closer look at the services NAVSEA offers and the kind of work performed. The candidate then meets with an interview panel made up of four to six top-level leaders and managers.

The interview panel's goal is to identify the best-fit candidates. The interview panel aspires to build a highly committed, knowledge-based workforce for 2020; a workforce that reflects the demographics of the future. NAVSEA is in a competition for talent, so the interview panel strives to create a relaxed environment where the candidates can be themselves. The interview panel doesn't interrogate the candidates, but strategically explores areas of mutual interest such as continuing education, long-term career





goals, service to the fleet, and ultimately, service to the United States.

NAVSEA's selection official receives feedback from the interview panel and extends offers based on the panel's recommendations.

### **The New Hires: Who They Are**

As I mentioned earlier, the mean average GPA of NAVSEA's 2007 new NAIP hires was 3.4, comparing very favorably to the program's minimum requirement of 3.0; and six out of 10 interns were racial or ethnic minorities or women. Even though only 15 percent of engineering undergraduates are female, 40 percent of those in the final round of interviews for engineer positions were women.

NAVSEA focused recruitment efforts on top-ranked schools in the mid-Atlantic area. Candidates were hired from more than 20 universities, including such top schools as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Webb Institute, Duke University, Johns Hopkins University, Carnegie Mellon, Penn State University, and the University of Virginia.

The recruitment program attracted other noteworthy applicants and candidates, among them the Department of Defense Student Training and Academic Recruit candidate from the University of Puerto Rico; the presidents of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers from Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia; and the valedictorian

at the Webb Institute, one of the nation's top naval architecture and marine engineering undergraduate schools. The student president and vice president of Carnegie Mellon's Society of Women Engineers were among those in the final-round interviews.

Although most candidates had three or four competing job offers on the table, the NAVSEA's NAIP acceptance rate was 70 percent—three times the acceptance rate experienced by federal agencies. Job offers were extended to successful final-round interview candidates within 30 days of their interview. This is a feat very few federal agencies can match.

### **Keeping Them at NAVSEA**

Surveys of new NAIP hires indicate that preparation for the arrival of new hires is extremely important, so NAVSEA focuses on readiness and communication; and most important, NAVSEA ensures the new hires understand our end customer—the fleet. Our studies have shown that whenever NAVSEA's civilians are able to connect their work with the fleet and the Navy's mission, they are invigorated.

NAVSEA has a Distinguished Speaker's Program for new NAIP hires. The NAVSEA Distinguished Speaker Series began in the spring of 2005 with its inaugural speaker, Karl Rove, then deputy chief of staff to President George W. Bush. Since then, various members of Congress, directors of government agencies, a Supreme Court justice, and chief executive officers within industry have committed their time to this important Navy training program. Two recent speakers were retired Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The objective of the series is part leadership development and part opportunity for the new hires to meet important people. The Distinguished Speaker Series has been recognized by the director for acquisition career management for both its development and retention value to NAVSEA NAIP members. As such, it is integral to NAVSEA's recruitment efforts and will have a far-ranging impact on the command's future workforce.

NAVSEA's recruitment strategy has been a demonstrable resounding success and is leading towards an inspired, motivated, and increasingly diverse acquisition workforce. The NAVSEA's new NAIP hires are seeing how what they do serves the fleet, the government, and ultimately the world. NAVSEA's new NAIP hires want to be challenged, and NAVSEA is making sure that they are. You get only one chance to make a good first impression, and NAVSEA is making the best of that single chance.

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